1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
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to find little evidence of miscegenation among the blacks and Malays in northeast Arnhem Land. The writer measured a large number of individuals in this area and found only two individuals who might be classed as hybrid. The two skin colors were slightly lighter than the darker type of black, but no lighter than the type of pure Australoid found in the interior regions where there was no opportunity of racial mixture. These individuals also had the mongoloid broad head and straight hair. Their brachycephalism clearly marked them off from the dolichocephalic heads of the pure aborigines. The straight hair, however, was little different from that of the pure strains. There are several reasons for this lack of interbreeding. The first is the insistence of the people east of the Goyder River that their females remain monogamous and faithful. They are very different from the peoples to the west of this river, who center around the Liverpool River and Cape Don, where wife-lending and a kind of primitive prostitution are common.

The writer, although he was frequently offered the wives of many of the men from the western regions as a friendly gesture, was never embarrassed by such offers from the more eastern people, except by two men, both of whom had lived for long periods of their lives in the west, and were considered "low fellows" by their tribesmen. This insistence on the faithfulness of wives chiefly accounts for the lack of mixture. A large proportion of the white men who sailed along the Arafura coast have been killed or attacked by the natives, because, in almost every case, of a white man's attempting to have illegal sexual relations with native women. The same conditions must have prevailed during Malay times. All the native informants insist on this fact.

In addition to the above reason for lack of racial mixture, there is the fact that the Malays also displayed a considerable wisdom in preventing trouble from breaking out between the two races through attempts to interfere with native women. They organized a system of guards or "policemen" to watch their men and prevent them from having contact with native women. All the blacks in this whole area speak very highly of the Malay traders, for they always mention first their generosity and immediately after this they say, "They let our women alone." In the same breath they will tell a white man whom they consider to be their friend that the white and Japanese traders are "no good" because they are stingy in their trade and are always trying to rape their women.

A number of white pearlers have been through the islands and along the coast, but no Caucasian half-castes are found in the region east of the Goyder River and north of Groote Eylandt. When one knows the "barnyard morals" of the average white trader, this is eloquent testimony to the high standards of native morality and of the chastity of their women. The lack of white hybrids is also explained by the feeling the

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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whites of the north have for the black men of this district. The killing of several whites and Japanese has put a heavy fear in the hearts of all intruders into these parts. The natives have a reputation for treachery, largely because of their ambushing of several white pearlers and night attacks on a few Japanese boats, where all the men were killed, in retaliation for mistreatment of their women.

These last few remarks have been added further to substantiate the possible causes which prevented race mixture when the Malays were coming into North Australia. Since the rapacious civilization of the West cannot produce half-castes in this region, it is less probable that the more gentle Malay culture would produce racial hybrids in North Australia. Tindale, in his article on the Groote Eylandt natives, says that the Malays were interested in acquiring native women to take home with them. I can find no evidence of this among the Murngin and their neighboring tribes. A number of native men, however, did go to Macassar and the other islands whence the Malays had come. The writer met one or two of these men who had served as pearlers on seasonal voyages on Malay boats.

The influence of the Malay race and culture has not been important in northeastern Arnhem Land. There are but slight traces of hybridization in race or culture. The greatest influence is found in the material culture, and the least in the social institutions of Murngin civilization. Compared with the total number of traits found in aboriginal culture, those added from the more eastern civilization are very few indeed and, with the exception of the dugout complex, have had no significant influence on the development of Murngin civilization. On the other hand, when an examination is made of the even larger number of traits found in Malay culture, and they are contrasted with the very few adopted by the Murngin from the Malays, it becomes even further demonstrable that Murngin civilization remained very near to what it was before the Malay arrived, and that the Malay gave little of his own civilization to aboriginal Australia.

History of Burial Customs

The Murngin now finally dispose of their dead by placing the bones in a symbolically carved hollow log and planting the log upright within the camp. This is true of all the tribes except those in Cape Wessel Island, where the natives, after wrapping the bones of the dead in paper bark, put them in rock shelters. I am told by island natives that the rock shelter is used also in the interior back of Blue Mud Bay. All the natives to the west, such as the Gunwingu and Maung, use the hollow-log method of disposal. Historically this situation raises an interesting problem of priority of burial customs. The distribution of the rock burial method in the far

*773 *532

Four bark paintings and an engraved smoking pipe[1] deal with the myth of *Oijal* and *Neri-neri*.

Plate 92A is the ancestor *Oijal*. He is carrying his stone-headed spear and spear-thrower in one hand, three boomerangs, *kunilili*, in the other, a spirit bag[2] round his neck and an opossum string pubic apron. The transverse bars across his chest and abdomen are body scars and the band round his neck, as well as the V-shaped line of dots on his chest, are painted body decorations.

In the bark painting, Pl. 92D, the story of *Oijal* and his sister in their caves at Melville Bay is illustrated in considerable detail. *Oijal*, the central figure, carries a boomerang in his left hand and two boomerangs, a stone-headed spear and a spear-thrower in his right. Groups of three boomerangs are shown to the left of his head and the right of his thigh. Another stone-headed spear is immediately to the left. The caves in which *Oijal* and his sister now live are indicated by two crescents, *b*, *b*, on the upper edge. The two designs, *a*, *a*, on the right and left-hand edge of the painting are totemic rocks near the caves. Hanging from the right-hand crescent, *b*, from the right arm of *Oijal* and in the extreme upper right at *d* are three of the baskets which *Oijal* and *Neri-neri* filled with honey. The four dotted semi-circular designs below, *a*, *a*, are the bark dishes in which the ancestors cooked their honey at Melville Bay. Wandaraui River, near Melville Bay, made when the ancestors felled the tree, is represented by the *zigzag* cross-hatched lines at *e* on the lower edge. A similar design, *f*, upper left, is a tributary of Wandaraui River. Cabbage palms, *c*, *c*, *c*, *c*, grow near the caves of *Oijal*.

In Pl. 92B the panels *a*, *e* and *f* are the boomerangs belonging to *Oijal* and *b*, *b*, the foliage of some unidentified edible tuber, the tubers being shown on panels *c*, *d* and *g*. The dots on either side of the tubers are small stones on the ground. The central parallel vertical lines represent a track showing many wallaby footprints.

The upper part of this bark painting, Pl. 92C, deals with the man, *Oijal*, at Trial Bay and his day's catch of three snakes and eleven goannas. There is also a number of snake eggs in a basket made from the leaves of the cabbage palm (rectangle, lower right). *Oijal*, with his two hunting dogs, is on the upper left. The central cross-hatched transverse band is a stream at Trial Bay. On the bottom panel are the food-gathering efforts of his sister, *Neri-neri*. She is pictured on the right, digging stick in hand, a large carrying-basket over her shoulder and a small one round her neck. During the day she collected a number of edible yams.

An Aboriginal's Visit to the Land of the Malays

177 *773 *532 Eth

This painting describes a visit of a *jiritja* man, *Amalatja*, to the land of the Malay trepangers, who, during last century, periodically visited the coast of

1. This is described elsewhere (Fig. 62B, p. 308).
2. The spirit bag worn by the medicine man gives him greater power in healing or magic, because of the totemic spirits which live in it. See Warner (1937), p. 470; also p. 40.

[778]

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 Oil7 Murngin Oil7

Arnhem Land. The painting was made by *Amalatja*'s son, *Mungarauu*, to whom his father had related his experiences. When the old man, *Amalatja*, was wandering round a village called Jumaina[83] on one occasion he saw women making calico (cloth) by putting two bamboos in the ground and stringing cotton thread between them, obviously a native loom. They shook the bamboos, and made a hammering noise (possibly either the sound of the shuttle or the beating of the thread in place), and 'calico' came off. These same women, called *Jubana*,[84] also collected the rice from the fields.

One day he saw a bandit, or a robber, called *H'uruuu*, burn down the house of one of the weavers, apparently a raid. *Mungarauu* said that his father, who was puzzled about this outrage, thought that perhaps *H'uruuu* did not like the sound of the women making calico.

In the bottom of the painting, Pl. 93A, is *Mungarauu*'s picture of the Macassan women weaving. The women are shaking the bamboo handles by which *Mungarauu*'s father believed they made the calico (cloth). The cloth on each loom is a different colour. In panel *c*, one of the weavers is standing on the raised floor of a house under which the fowls are resting (right-hand edge), and in the upper central panel, *b*, *H'uruuu* is striking a light to burn down the house. The cross-hatched upper left panel, *a*, is the smoke from the blazing house, and the band on the upper edge, a cliff behind the women's residence.

Three Mythical Men and a Bush-fire, Caledon Bay

Three men, *H'irili*,[85] *H'ureri* and *Balang-altji*, among many others, once performed a sacred *jiritja* ceremony near the Gaimmaui River, which runs into the sea between Caledon and Trial Bays. The camp-fires of these men, through not being properly attended, started a bush-fire which spread over a wide area, destroying the trees, the animals and even the men who took part in the ceremony. The fire also burnt out the nest of the bandicoot, *warut-kuna*, and so frightened a hive of wild bees in a nearby swamp that they flew to Milingimbi to escape the danger. The men of the ceremony are now large white-barked eucalyptus trees, *garuri*, and the place of the bees, the Matamatani swamp, is now filled with large paper-bark trees.

Two bark paintings deal with the ceremony and the fire.

Plate 93B pictures three men, *a*, *H'irili*, *b*, *H'ureri*, and *c*, *Balang-altji*, standing in the *jiritja* ceremonial ground, near the Gaimmaui River. The camps of the performers are indicated by the five dark-coloured squares at *d*. It was from one of the lower of these camps that the bush-fire originated. The series of lozenges below the ceremonial ground, to the left of the men, and completely

83. This is supposed to be the home of the *Baijini*, p. 333. The later generations of aborigines, knowing of Jumaina, may have attached it to the *Baijini* myth.

84. See carved figure of *Jubana*, Pl. 137A, B.

85. *H'irili* is also associated with the Ilzard, *bije*, and the deposit of yellow ochre at Gaimmaui.

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 O117 Murngin O117

fied palm leaves.[69] The smoking pipes of the *Baijini*, also, were unlike those of the Malays,[69] but resembled those used by our own party. In fact, the aborigines used to call our pipes *Baijini* pipes.

The *Baijini* may have been an isolated group of fair-skinned people, perhaps early Dutch or Portuguese, whose habits and appearance especially attracted the attention of the aborigines. The fact that the *Baijini* are now part of the mythology, as shown in the bark paintings and mentioned by Berndt,[70] does not necessarily indicate great age. The aborigines' songs of the Malay prau at Bickerton Island,[71] the bark paintings from Oenpelli of the *Mimi* with a European pipe[72], prove how the mythical stories keep up to date.

The *Baijini* party, which, in one myth, consisted of two men, two women and their children, came from a country to the north, called Jumaina. They sailed into Port Bradshaw and anchored at the mouth of a creek flowing into the south side of the harbour. As soon as they had established camp, the *Baijini* started to collect, cook and dry the trepang. The men, whom at first the aborigines looked upon as dangerous, always carried a long knife, *badi*.

One day, however, two aborigines, who had sneaked through the mangroves to have a look at the boat and its occupants, saw several small *Baijini* boys gathering cockles on the beach. The men, intrigued with the light colour of the boys' skin, crept closer to get a better view, when the boys, catching sight of the aborigines, beckoned them across. The *Baijini* children, equally puzzled about the dark colour of the aboriginal men,[73] felt them all over, and asked many questions, but neither group could understand the other. The *Baijini* children then took the aborigines by the hand, led them to a patch of jungle, and, motioning them to sit down, ran to tell their parents what had happened. Two *Baijini* men returned with their sons, coaxed the aborigines to their boat and gave them food. Although at first the men did not like the taste of the *Baijini* food, they soon became used to it. Later they stayed with the *Baijini* and helped them to collect trepang, bringing their wives and relatives to assist in the work.

Seven bark paintings and two carved heads[74] depict the *Baijini*.

In Pl. 107A the four figures are the *Baijini* people at Port Bradshaw. Reading from the left their names are: *Tainitja*, *Ditjaru*, name forgotten, and *Gurumuluna*, whom the aborigines looked upon as the head man.[75] The men, *Tainitja* and *Gurumuluna*, are carrying large steel knives, one in either hand.

Plate 107B represents two *Baijini* men, the one on the right *Gurumuluna*, and the other unidentified. They are surrounded by *jiritja* cloud symbols, i.e. the triangular designs associated with the Cape Arnhem-Port Bradshaw area. The

69. Pl. 128A. 70. p. 880.
70. Berndt, R. and C. (1949), p. 219. 71. p. 98. 72. Pl. 49A.
73. This suggests that the *Baijini* came from a country where the inhabitants were not as dark skinned as the aborigines.
74. The carved heads are described in Part 5.
75. On a carved head, Pl. 130B, *Gurumuluna* has a distinguishing bodge on his forehead or hat.

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 O117 Murngin O117

THE ART OF YIRRKALLA

The Saw-fish, Nalgan

Plate 127C belongs to the saw-fish, *nalgan*, totem of Milingimbi. Four saw-fish are depicted, two in the upper panel at *a, a*, and two in the lower at *b, b*. In the lower panel a fresh-water tortoise is shown between the tails of the saw-fish. Scattered throughout the drawing are small star-like designs which represent the star-fish, *midjala*. These fish provide food for the tortoises. The oval designs between the star-fish represent seaweed, *djiwul*, and the dots, its fruit. The two fish on the right side of the upper panel are called by the native name of *wungalbu*, and the three transverse cross-hatched panels, *c, c, c*, are sand-bars near the totemic place. There are three flying fish, *digar*, at the upper edge of the bark painting.

The Turtle, Wilirn

The totemic place of the turtle, *wilirn*, pictured in Pl. 127D, is an island called Nulgunin-nuna, situated north-west of Elcho Island. The triangular patterns occupying most of the surface of the bark painting are clouds created by the three turtles spraying water into the sky. Two king-fish are shown in the clouds, one at *a* and one at *b*.

2. SMOKING PIPES AND MYTHS

As far as I am aware the long smoking pipe, Fig. 59A, B, is used in Australia only by the aborigines of Arnhem Land and the adjacent islands.

Tobacco smoking was introduced by the Malays within the last century or so when they visited Australia during their periodical journeys to collect trepang and pearl shell, though the *Baijini* myth suggests that the aborigines may have become acquainted with tobacco at an even earlier date. After the Commonwealth Government, about 1910, prohibited the Malays from coming to Australia the aborigines continued to use the Malay pipe, smoking either a substitute or European tobacco, occasionally issued by white traders and missionaries.

In general, the pipes[70] are made in a few minutes from the pithy stem of a shrub (*Guettarda speciosa*). The aboriginal removes the pith with a thin stick, plugs one end with bark, cuts a hole in the side an inch or more from the end, fits a bowl[71] saved from the old pipe, and, except for the engraving, the pipe is complete.

The pipes I collected are about an inch in diameter and varied in length from eight inches at Groote Eylandt to thirty inches at Yirrkalla, Fig. 59B. It was necessary to have a longer pipe stem at Yirrkalla so that there would be sufficient room for the totemic designs. In use, Pl. 124D, the aboriginal takes a

70. The bowls of the early pipes were made of tin-plate and carefully treasured. Since the last war, most pipe bowls are made from shortened cartridge cases. As mentioned earlier, the aborigines recognize the difference between the *Baijini* pipes, which are similar to those used by Europeans, and those of the Malays. The *Baijini* were a mysterious group of fair-skinned people who once camped at Port Bradshaw, myth, p. 333.

71. Warner (1937), p. 461, refers to the smoking pipes of the Murngin, near Milingimbi, and Elkin and the Berndts (1950), p. 102, to those at Yirrkalla.

Text continues on p. 391

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OII7 Murngin OII7

the tides are high. When the moon is in the zenith at sunrise or sunset, the tides are low. The aborigines, noting these facts, believe that the high tides running into the full and new moon make it fat and round. When the tides are low the water pours into the sea beneath and the moon becomes thin.

Plate 155D illustrates the myth of the moon, the dugong, the man, *Guripan*, and his wife. The moon, *Nalimba*, is the central semicircle. Above, the three torpedo-shaped figures are the yams, *wuralki*, which he took into the sky with him. The stars on either side of the moon represent the man *Guripan* and his wife, whose misfortune was responsible for the plentiful supply of *takia*.

On the right of the lower panel is the dugong woman, *Balwokman*, and on the left the footmarks of the pandanus-tree men, *Gurun-gurun*. The cross-hatching in the lower panel symbolizes the large wave breaking on the beach, frightening the dugong just as the pandanus tree men were about to spear it.

Plate 156C deals with the same myth, but with less detail. Again the torpedo-like designs are the yams, *wuralki*, taken into the sky by *Nalimba*. The moon, as a crescent in the last quarter, is called *moilbani*, and as a disc, lower left, is *bamuk*. The cross-hatched ring, which is regarded as the wet-weather camp of the moon, represents the halo commonly seen round the moon during misty weather.

The Southern Cross and Pointers, Baluŋ

The Southern Cross and Pointers are looked upon as a stingray (the Cross) being eternally pursued round the southern sky by a shark (the Pointers). The myth is associated with Caledon Bay.

In Pl. 155D the four upper stars in the painting (the Southern Cross) represent a stingray, and the two lower stars (the Pointers) a shark, which is chasing the stingray. These creatures are shown to the right. The wide difference between the myths of the Southern Cross at Yirrkalla and Groote Eylandt[16] less than one hundred and twenty miles apart indicates a minimum of social contacts between the two tribes.

The Milky Way, Milimeia

In creation times the Milky Way, *milimeia*, was a watercourse near Blue Mud Bay.

At that time two brothers, *Nungumiri*, the elder, and *Jikaraara*, the younger, went fishing in a bark canoe. When near Woodah Island[17] they caught a rock cod, *garuka*, and were on their long homeward journey when a heavy storm sprang up. A large wave fell aboard, badly straining the frail bark canoe and filling it with water. The next wave, breaking the canoe in halves, left the brothers struggling in the sea. For many hours the two brothers swam towards the distant mainland. Then the arms of the younger brother became so swollen he had forgotten to remove his arm-bands that he finally collapsed and was

16. Groote Eylandt myth, p. 185. 17. Map, Fig. 1.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
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177 794 797 Kunapipi performances has served to strengthen native belief in its efficacy; but this tendency will last only as long as do the members of "the older generation".

[831] By the driving underground, so to speak, of the Kunapipi, its sexual element has become considerably accentuated. In some cases, ritual copulation has lost a certain proportion of its sacred aura and serves as an excuse for promiscuity. This aspect is particularly apparent in contact areas where detribalization has taken place, and intensive cultural disintegration has resulted.

177 794 778 For example, on war-time Army Settlements during 1944–46 the performance of the Kunapipi (or "Big Sunday", as it was called) was forbidden by Civil and Army authorities alike, on the grounds that the big religious ceremonies entailed interruption of normal work. As a result of this prohibition very few of the sacred ceremonies were 648 carried out, although a number were performed surreptitiously some distance from the Settlements, and were consequently of brief duration. One development of this external control was the accentuation of sexual promiscuity through the medium of the "Big Sunday", and the indiscriminate use of sacred tabus for the materialistic ends of a minority. In the latter case, food, clothing, and other goods were sometimes declared sacred, and could in this way be taken over by the person or the group pronouncing the tabu.

Whole areas of the settlement would, unknown to the womenfolk, be declared ritually sacred to men: latrines, washing-sheds, camps, roads and so on were pronounced tabu-ed to women. A woman inadvertently entering the demarcated area would be threatened with [831] punishment, which she could avert through payment of goods or sexual favours: usually, of course, she preferred to "pay" with coitus.

This practice reached such proportions that Settlement officers endeavoured strongly to oppose it, and cited it as an additional reason for prohibiting the Kunapipi ceremonies; nevertheless the habit persisted, and seems to have aroused interest and enjoyment among both men and women. On the Daly River, west of Darwin, a rather similar practice has become institutionalized, in attempts to reinforce a religious life which is fast disappearing because of the disrupting effects of local European contact over a comparatively long period. Other examples, too, could be brought forward to confirm this particular distortion of "Big Sunday" religion.

But these features are abnormal; they have been brought about by circumstances beyond the control of the natives themselves, and represent merely one unpleasant result of uncontrolled or badly planned contact between two widely differing cultures. They would not normally appear, for they are not a part of indigenous religious 177 life.

794 We might well ask what is the future of a cult like the Kunapipi.

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

The important secular ceremony of the carved wuramu figure, the "Collection" or "Crook Man", was directly inspired by what Aborigines had seen in Macassar and at home on the mainland.[6] At various places along the coast the visitors declared certain rocks to be sacred. They called them *karei*, or "King" rocks, and placed on them food and money as offerings to a guardian spirit. At the beginning and end of the trading season, it is said that the Indonesian fleets met in Arnhem Bay to perform ceremonies that culminated in wild debauchery. Alcohol was freely distributed. There were singing and dancing, fighting and flashing of knives, and the prostitution of Aboriginal women. But such scenes were more frequent during the later phase of Indonesian contact.

During the earlier period of contact the relations between the Aborigines and the traders seem to have been most amiable, although perhaps the memory of this has mellowed with the passing of time. Trafficking in women, according to their tradition, was more carefully controlled. Organised relationships were set up, where women went more or less automatically to the trading partners of their husbands or parents; and during the Indonesians' ceremonial periods they made gifts of food and other goods to the Aborigines, who reciprocated by sending over their women. Aboriginal women used to work in and around the huts of these traders, and the important leaders, such as captains of praus, maintained their own mistresses. It is said too that Indonesian women were very occasionally brought to these shores, but those who did come were for the most part treated as prostitutes. Alcohol was not so plentiful during this early phase of contact, and it was not until the period from about 1800 until 1907, when Indonesian trading was prohibited by the Commonwealth Government of Australia, that severe fights and brawls became common in these coastal settlements.

Over the years these visitors took back with them to Macassar numbers of Aboriginal men and women. Some of them were returned in the following season to their home camps in Australia while others remained behind in their new environment.[7]

It is difficult, after so great a lapse of time, to be sure of the actual state of affairs in regard to sexual relations between Indonesian traders and Aboriginal women. Many Aboriginal men today deny that their womenfolk had illicit sexual relations to

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
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more inclined to be blatant about sexual associations, while the other, perhaps equally promiscuous, is less willing to acknowledge this fact in public.

Even before the memorable meeting of Captain Mathew Flinders with Pobassoo, on 17 February 1803,[11] in the "Malay Road" between the English Company Islands and the mainland near Cape Wilberforce, Dutch and Portuguese voyagers had visited the north coast of Australia,[12] but their contact with the Aborigines seems to have been only transitory and unimportant. Before this, too, there is reason to believe that these coastal people had some association with native groups of the Torres Strait Islands and southern New Guinea. This subject is treated in one of the long song cycles of eastern Arnhem Land – although in later years, when the Missions introduced Badu Islanders (from the Torres Straits), these indigenous songs proved receptive in some degree to new ideas concerning that area.[13]

Mathew Flinders was followed by other explorers and surveyors,[14] until in the last quarter of the nineteenth century European traders became increasingly familiar with the Arnhem Land coast. About this time the relations between Macassans and the Aborigines began to deteriorate, and a number of massacres of these Indonesian visitors[15] were reported. Intercourse between Aborigines and Europeans was far from amicable. Mass shootings took place, native women were abducted, and some white men were speared. There was an attempt to settle part of the "Arafura" country, between Milingimbi and Elcho Island; in 1885 Florida cattle station was established near Mount Delight, between the Woolen and Blyth rivers.[16]

When the Macassan visits to the north coast came to an end there was an influx of Japanese pearlers and traders, and a few Europeans began to concentrate on trepanging. These people employed on their boats Aborigines from Darwin, Bathurst and Melville Islands and Goulburn Islands, as well as natives from the Torres Strait Islands, so that the coastal Arnhem Landers came in contact with a variety of "racial" types. The Japanese, for example, did not remain for long on friendly terms with the local natives; there were occasional spearings and massacres,

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
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175 especially in the region about Caledon Bay and Blue Mud Bay.
Some Europeans too were involved in spearings, so that by the
●648 1930's the Aborigines of these parts had gained a reputation for
177 being "savage and warlike".

The natives, however, were not entirely to blame for their occasional attacks on invading strangers, who had not the long-standing trade ties of economic reciprocity and friendship that the Indonesians had enjoyed. When we look more closely into the underlying reasons we can understand that the Aborigines might well have resisted the insidious forms of exploitation, the low bartering estimates, and the constant interference with their womenfolk. Matters were accentuated by a punitive expedition led by police, which went with horses from Milingimbi to Blue Mud Bay and Caledon Bay,[17] and indiscriminately shot a number of Aborigines; while the killing of a police constable on Woodah Island, near Groote Eylandt, aroused a *crescendo* of publicity and outcry in Southern newspapers of the day.[18]

175 By 1930 several Mission stations had been set up at various
places along the coast, so that in succeeding years most of the
177 Aborigines in this region were in more or less constant contact
197 with missionaries. A Church Missionary Society expedition in 1934, and a local trepanger, apprehended some natives who were asociated with a Japanese massacre at Caledon Bay and brought them to Darwin for trial. Soon after this, in 1935, Dr Donald Thomson set out on a pacificatory expedition with the purpose of finding out the reasons for the hostility of these natives, the extent of Japanese contact, and the general nature of local conditions.[19] During the north-west monsoon season of 1935-36 and during 1936-37 unrest among these Aborigines became more marked, mainly owing to the invasion of the Arnhem Land Aboriginal Reserve[20] by large numbers of Japanese and European traders.[21] Missionary enterprise was extended and intensified too, attacking indigenous forms of social behaviour and morality in a way which met with little positive resistance – although attempts were made to oppose the less insidious intrusion of traders, bent on purely economic (and sexual) exploitation. Evangelisation became closely co-ordinated with the aim of establishing all along

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
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the coast, centres of white settlement in the form of Mission stations. These Mission bodies were interested mainly in the problems of becoming self-supporting, of saving the Aborigines' souls, and of disseminating European beliefs and conventions.

A little before war was declared between Australia and Japan the visits of Japanese traders and pearlers to the Arnhem Land coast were curtailed, and finally forbidden altogether. Army, Air Force and Naval bases were formed in various parts of the Northern Territory, particularly after the bombing of Darwin in 1942-43. On the north-eastern coast the main camps of this kind were at Gove (Yirrkalla Mission settlement), Milingimbi, and the Wessel Islands, while there was a civil aviation and Air Force base at Groote Eylandt. Aborigines of these parts came subsequently into close contact with several thousands of Air Force and Army (as well as Naval) personnel. They were indented for menial work and employed in a variety of ways. Boats and 'planes were continually passing to and fro;[22] and the isolated crashes of a few 'planes, the activity of Army camp life and entertainment, and other phenomena of an artificial and abnormal life, heightened and altered the tempo of indigenous life. Traditional ceremonies and food-collecting were interrupted and curtailed, and the equilibrium of social life in general was far more deeply disturbed than it had been throughout all the preceding centuries of alien contact.

When these military establishments were finally abandoned (the last, Gove, in April 1946) the Aborigines were left to Missions whose staffs had been depleted, and who could not provide steady employment for the many natives who clustered about their stations. So the natives found themselves longing for the old times, when food and trade goods were generously distributed. The customary staid smoothness of Mission life, with its calm treatment of religion, they found depressing. Where, they asked, were the war-time picture shows, that brought before them rough-riding cowboys, lingering love scenes, and partially-naked white women, and the strange musical accompaniments of this form of entertainment? This nostalgia for past pleasures led to increasing signs of irresponsibility among the younger people, a

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
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175 trend towards sexual excess and a desire for increased contact
177 with Europeans.

Such is the general outline of the conditions that have some bearing on our main theme.

177 During the Malay-Macassan epoch the Aborigines seem to have maintained a fairly well integrated pattern of culture, absorbing
• 648 or discarding new ideas without seriously disturbing its basic
[439] structure. The early Indonesians were to the Aborigines just representatives of another clan or tribal group not greatly dissimilar to their own, and so they carried on trade with these visitors, just as they would with members of other clans who had desirable commodities to barter. It was a natural outcome of this that the Aborigines should extend their traditional codes of hospitality, making their womenfolk available to the Macassan traders.[23] When the strangers were thus provided with temporary or permanent wives, the social organisation of the groups and the personal opinions of their members were adjusted to suit both parties – and so a delicate problem was settled. Occasional arguments and fights did break out between them, but these were usually regarded as being comparable to inter-clan feuds or quarrels.

[273] Once the quantities of intoxicating drink began to enter the settlements, especially during the last phase of Macassan contact, relations began to deteriorate. There was irregular promiscuity, women were bartered in return for goods, and quarrelling and fights became more bitter and more frequent. Stories relating the sexual excess that took place during this period show how strongly this behaviour affected the psychological makeup of the Aborigines. Old women of north-eastern Arnhem Land like to talk about the days of Macassan contact, and they contrast the uneventful period of recent years with the time when drinking bouts resulted in sexual promiscuity, and food and clothing were easily obtainable. Even the time of plenty that accompanied the Air Force occupation was not the same, they say, as the old trading days and the glamour of the Indonesian visitors.

177 When the Japanese and European traders came to this coast,
648 the Aborigines at first resented their intrusion. "Why," they
439 asked, "do these strangers take the place of our old friends?"

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However, they wanted the trade goods that these people could provide, and so they made an effort to adjust themselves to this new type of contact and to take up again the old traditional form of trading to which they were accustomed.

But they soon found that conditions had changed. These strangers brought with them Aborigines from other areas, and preferred to exploit the wealth of marine products themselves, using relatively few of the local people. This, of course, restricted the distribution of trade goods which they had expected to receive in payment for their work. Large scale trading was curtailed and was almost entirely replaced by individual bartering. This led to general resentment and dis-satisfaction.

They discovered, too, that although these Japanese and Europeans required native women for sexual purposes they were rarely willing to compensate their rightful guardians and husbands, preferring instead to decoy native women on to their boats or (as frequently happened) to take them by force. These same visitors paid no attention to native codes of morality and social intercourse,[24] and preferred to enjoy variety in sexual relations rather than to maintain one woman over a period. Any reasonably attractive woman was sexual bait to these men, some of whom admittedly tried to seduce as many of the younger ones as possible. Such an attitude has not been confined to this north-eastern coast. Many Europeans and Asiatics alike throughout the Northern Territory regarded all Aboriginal women as potential sexual partners, a state of affairs which exists to the present day. The behaviour of Japanese and European traders, trepangers and pearlers was modified in some areas because of the wariness and hostility of the Aboriginal men. At Groote Eylandt, for instance, native women were to some extent segregated from men even in their own camp life.[25] But in other regions, as in western Arnhem Land, it was accentuated.

Conditions of this kind resulted in various "massacres" and spearings, which continued until the Japanese were excluded and European trading was curtailed with the advent of the last war. But this period of what might be termed mutual antagonism had one good effect, which must not be underestimated. It forced many of these Aborigines to avail themselves of their natural

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resources and develop their own internal economy, the clans to become more closely integrated and the group as a whole more self-sufficient. They were no longer dependent primarily on export and import, spending a great deal of their time around the Macassan settlements. Such outside goods as did find their way into the society were soon absorbed. It is probable, too, that their womenfolk had far less sexual contact with Europeans and Japanese than with the Indonesian traders. There were never as many of these newcomers on the coast at one time as there had been Malays and Macassans, and the Aborigines were never on such intimate terms with them as they had been with their predecessors.

However, the growing intensity of Mission contact, and the presence during the war years of large numbers of European troops, seem to have destroyed the natives' resistance to alien infiltration. Soon the reaction set in – actually the culminative effect of long centuries of contact with peoples who were culturally and psychologically different to themselves; and the result was gradually increasing dependence on Europeans. The desire for new ideas, and for all the material benefits they could achieve, was accentuated: but these were to be obtained only at the expense of their own culture and ideology. Although in the past they had learnt much about the successful absorption of alien belief and practice, these latter years found them wanting in knowledge concerning the practical application of their experience to modern problems. The deviation between Aboriginal and European cultures was greater than that between Aboriginal and Macassan, so that the present day finds these people largely unprepared for the changes that are upon them. Important aspects of their traditional life are disappearing. Religious fervour for the "old gods" is weakening; law and order are becoming more and more a matter of external control; and general disillusionment, with increased sexual laxity, accentuates these features that accompany a period of transition.

While the effects of long alien contact are only too apparent insofar as the native culture is concerned, the direct physical effects (excluding the effect of Asiatic and Indonesian strains on the Aboriginal stock) are few.[30] The fact that venereal disease are

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The direct repercussions of these murders and killings are of special interest to us here.

The great Arnhem Land Reserve had been declared in 1931, as a result of Bleakley's Report[1] of 1928, and a conference held in 1929[2] by representatives of Missions, societies and associations interested in Aboriginal welfare. This report and this conference were indications of changing public opinion throughout Australia in relation to the Aboriginal question. More and more people and societies were willing to offer sympathy and, what was at that time most important, constructive suggestions.

The establishing of this Reserve, it was hoped, would put an end to undesirable alien contact in the shape of European and Japanese[3] traders, pearlers and beachcombers, thus halting the detribalisation of the Aborigines and ensuring greater opportunities for missionary endeavour. The Reserve was, officially, inviolable. Only missionaries, officials, and other accredited people were to be permitted within its boundaries. But it was quite impossible to patrol adequately such a long coast-line and so large a territory, and from time to time unauthorised people did enter the Reserve. This was especially the case during the first few years, when there was still a sprinkling of trepangers and pearlers, and Japanese infiltration became actually intensified. It was during these years, too, that the Aborigines committed most of the killings mentioned in the foregoing chapters.

From the natives' point of view, the formation of this Reserve meant nothing at all. Most of them knew nothing about it, and those who did cared less. Why should they bother about a

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175 Reserve? It was their own territory, where their ancestors had
648 lived, and they were bound to it by strong spiritual ties. Laws were passed by an alien Government, about which they knew very little, and which was (so they thought at that time) no concern of theirs. Japanese, and a few Europeans, were still round the coast; conditions had not perceptibly changed.

175 Since the termination of Indonesian contact there had been a
648 lag in trading, but the Missions, which since 1916 had been
177 spreading along the coast, were helping to fill this gap. From
197 that date, and much earlier in the Roper River area, the Aborigines began to drift into these Mission stations and to avail themselves of the opportunities they offered. They did not as yet distinguish between the different forms of contact. The Japanese aims of exploitation were, in their eyes, very much the same as those of the Europeans, while they scarcely differentiated between these white traders and the missionaries. European traders and missionaries, officials and police, were representatives of an alien form of Government, which did not recognise the hereditary rights and legal codes of the Aborigines themselves.

175 How could these people judge differently, when they observed
648 from actual cases that the missionaries, trepangers and police
177 worked hand in hand together – as, for instance, during the Caledon Bay trial? They realised too that the Europeans were unwilling to believe them, particularly in the matter of evidence given in court. Their dialects were not understood, and the interpreters at their disposal not always reliable. What was justice to them was crime to the Europeans, an outlook largely determined by the cultural pattern of each group.

So the natives were thrown on their own resources, and felt obliged to settle the matter of their defence in their own way. When this conflicted with European interests, they seem to have realised that they would have to sublimate their own views, or else pay the full penalty of acting on their own initiative; and this penalty involved either physical violence or imprisonment or both. In the white man's court of law the Aborigines were inarticulate, and powerless to defend themselves. Had they known that an increasing number of white Australians were interested in their welfare, and ready to step forward in their

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defence, they might have been flattered. It is hard to tell. More probably they would have dismissed these people and their sympathy as being irrelevant and negligible, for the eastern Arnhem Landers, in particular, have a strong sense of their own importance. These aliens did not know them intimately and personally, had not lived with them, and understood nothing of their language, and the complexities of their tribal life. No, for the time being (so they seem to have decided) they would have to depend on themselves alone, until they became articulate and their rights, as a minority, were realised and appreciated.

So much for the early days of the Arnhem Land Reserve, and for the attitude of the Aborigines living within it. We shall return later on to this subject, and see just how far conditions have changed today.

What were the direct results of the murders of Europeans and Japanese during the early 1930's? The opinion of Australians in general, apart from those who were indifferent or apathetic, seems to fall into three main categories. The extremists held that "the niggers should be taught a lesson", and that the best means of doing this was a punitive expedition. Such measures, they contended, had always succeeded in the past. The natives were, so to speak, beaten into subjection, and "cheeky" behaviour effectively discouraged. The conservative view, on the other hand, was that the culprits should be brought to justice and punished, and so made an example to others. The moderates insisted that a pacification expedition should be sent to Arnhem Land, the true circumstances of the killings investigated, and conditions altered so that there would be no need for a recurrence. As we have seen, the conservative plan was adopted and the extremist viewpoint officially discarded, while an attempt was made to put into practice the moderate view. Let us, then, glance in greater detail at some of these repercussions.

When the Minister of the Interior at Canberra heard that Traynor and Fagan had been killed by Aborigines, he declared that the matter was serious, and that some attempt should be made to secure the safety of white men legitimately engaged in the Territory.[4] The Darwin *Northern Standard* of 5 September 1933

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175 648 announced that a punitive expedition would be sent to Arnhem Land to avenge the death of Constable McColl on Woodah Island. "Despite strong protests from missionaries and others," continued the report, "the Federal Government has sent all supplies required to equip a formidable punitive expedition against the Aborigines in Arnhem Land. Federal Ministers who have had experience of native administration favour a punitive expedition. Lieut.-Col. R. H. Weddell (then Government Resident) strongly urges the necessity of strong measures to teach the natives a lesson. It is contended that unless police authority is upheld the natives will get out of hand, and the massacre of white residents and missionaries will follow. It is argued that if once the natives get the idea they can kill with impunity there is no knowing where they will stop. On the other hand, it is claimed the sending out of a small police party, which included McColl, was ill-advised, as it only roused the natives and incited them to attack".

[797] Missionaries and their associates in the South opposed such measures. They held meetings and protested to the Government, to some effect. But not all missionaries, apparently, were of this opinion — as witness, for example, Mr Dyer's evidence in the McColl murder case. Moderate opinion in the South swayed the Government to decide eventually against a punitive expedition. However, a police party under Constables Morey and Graham was sent out to Groote Eylandt via the Roper River. They did not plan to use Mission transport, for "as far as is possible care will be taken to remove the impression from the minds of the Aboriginals that the police are working in conjunction with the missionaries. Despite reference in the Southern Press regarding a punitive expedition, Superintendent Stretton emphasised his assertion that no punitive expedition of a death-dealing nature had ever been contemplated by the Administration in connection with any police party sent or to be sent to Caledon Bay. No extensive patrol work would be done by the police party either on Groote Eylandt or by boat, in the near or distant vicinity. The police would simply camp there as a protective party until after the wet season".[5]

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The Minister of the Interior (Mr Perkins) later decided a small party of experienced missionaries[6] should attempt to capture the murderers of Constable McColl and the Japanese.

We have already seen how the so-called "murderers" were eventually brought to justice. And at this juncture it is interesting to quote an opinion that appeared in the Southern Press in May 1934, after the Caledon Bay natives had been brought into Darwin for trial, and before the case had come before the Supreme Court.

"It looks as if interest in Caledon Bay may now sleep until Buck Eye and his warriors scupper a few more Japanese. A week or two ago Constable Hall was detailed to visit the region lone-handed and bring back witnesses; but the new Acting Administrator and Commissioner of Police has cancelled the senseless trip, and 'future action against the natives brought to Darwin is a matter for Government consideration'. It is to be hoped that it will think long before proceeding on confessions which might or might not have been pure bravado, and call the farce off. Everybody has had a fair innings – the missionaries their limelight and a Government subsidy, the Abos a free trip and some new experiences, the flapper Press its sensations, and the tax payers their usual privilege of paying for the whole muddle. So everybody should be satisfied."[7]

One of the Territorians, too, among others, had something to say on the murder of white men by Aborigines.[8] "A report comes into Darwin, we'll say of a murder or murders of white men. The police are at once despatched out to capture the native killers. They are captured, brought to Darwin, tried and convicted, sent to Fanny Bay for life. This is only one side of the affair. The public are satisfied. The murderer has been caught and convicted and the murdered man or men avenged. Now we'll look at the other side. The powers that be have never been bothered with this side. The Abo. witnesses who are brought to the trial of these murderers when in court will say anything that pleases, their word not being worth a pinch of salt. Now what did these murdered men do to the blacks to cause their loss of life? An Abo. does not kill without a reason. Was it loot, or were the white men

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175 648 interfering with or kidnapping their lubras, or were they shooting at or over them, or were they fraternising with the blacks, one of the gravest errors a white man can commit? If any of these happenings had occurred other than loot, the Abo. has no redress. The only law he recognises is to kill. He cannot and does not know how to take proceedings against the white man, and furthermore would not be given a hearing were these killings of the white men on the coast caused by any of these happenings? None has bothered to investigate. The Abo. killed a white, that's sufficient. We know Japanese have been killed for their interference with lubras, but what about the white murdered men? Was their crime the same? I cannot tell, because it has never been investigated. My maxim is 'A good Abo. is a dead Abo.' but when it comes to fair play I'm with the Abo. as well as the white man. . . . The greatest mistake is to allow the Abo. to step over the line, fraternise with them, and allow the Abo. to size them up and then their troubles begin, ending only in one way – camp looted or the men murdered".

Mr R. MacDonald, of the Northern Territory Gaol Service, also had comments to make. "When the natives of Arnhem Land are treated decently they are friendly, but imposition and ill treatment are keenly resented. That is why many Japanese trepang fishers and a few white men have felt the full blast of the Aborigines' hostility, and why Arnhem Land is reputed to be peopled by murderous blacks. Men fall very low in those waters. If they would only let the blacks alone they would be all right. They promise the natives all sorts of things, take them hundreds of miles away from their homes, and leave them with nothing. The black will do a lot for a promise – but he'll also do a lot if that promise is not fulfilled".[9]

175 648 797 Towards the end of 1933, the Commonwealth Government made a grant to meet the cost of the peace expedition that the Church Missionary Society had sent to Caledon Bay. It was decided that the Roper River Mission should be closed and a new one opened at Caledon Bay, since the establishment of a Mission station was considered to be an effective means of checking lawlessness among the local natives.[10] But some missionaries were opposed to this move, and the Presbyterian *Messenger* protested:

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"We believe it is a grave blunder to call in the missionaries to become agents of the police . . ."[11] The peace expedition had no really tangible result. There was an unsuccessful attempt to establish a Mission station at Caledon Bay; and the Roper River Mission station did not close down.

An important consequence of the Woodah Island and Caledon Bay murders, the outcry in the Southern Press, and the general agitation of the Administration and missionary bodies and associations, was the appointment of Dr Donald Thomson to visit eastern and north-eastern Arnhem Land. On his first expedition, which lasted from March 1935 until January 1936, he covered a wide area, sailing right around the coast and making some trips into the interior.[12]

As a result, Dr Thomson made certain recommendations regarding the future welfare and government of the Arnhem Landers.[13] It was desirable, he said, to have "absolute segregation. . . . The social structure *in toto* should be preserved as an essential factor in the life of these people", and "the nomadic habits of these people must be regarded as an integral part of their culture. The collecting of natives, not detribalised, into compounds or institutions should be prohibited. If it is desired to teach Christianity to these people, it should be insisted that the Christian teacher or missionary be prepared to visit the people in their own country, and not to gather them about a station or Mission school". Dr Thomson suggested also the "establishment and maintenance of patrols to move about among the nomadic tribes of Arnhem Land, in particular to protect the natives from interference and exploitation, and to maintain a state of domestic peace. Many of the 'attacks' that have occurred in this territory have undoubtedly been merely retaliatory measures to which the natives have been goaded. A particularly unfortunate aspect of these incidents is the fact that vengeance may sometimes be delayed and fall ultimately upon an entirely innocent individual". He listed special qualifications for men entrusted with these patrols, and advised that a medical officer should be employed.

A number of his other recommendations have a more general applicatino and do not specifically relate to Arnhem Land: 'the abolition of the anomalous system under which police constables

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175 648 act as Protectors of Aborigines; the adoption of a settled, uniform policy for the treatment of the whole of the Aboriginal population of Australia; the immediate establishment of a Department of Native Affairs staffed by men selected solely for their special qualifications and sympathies for dealing with the natives, etc.'.

080 Without commenting in detail on these recommendations of Dr Thomson, we should point out that complete segregation is today only an ideal, which could not be put into practice. It would, moreover, be unsatisfactory to the natives themselves, and especially to these coastal Arnhem Landers who have had so many long years of alien contact. The most enlightened course is to bring about their gradual adjustment to changing conditions, trying to keep the best elements in their traditional culture, and at the same time introducing them to the new culture and society to which they must eventually adapt themselves.

175 648 Although the Aborigines are not actually being gathered into compounds, most native camps around the Arnhem Land Mission stations are tending to become more or less static; and under present conditions it would be difficult to alter this. The suggested patrols through Arnhem Land were never instituted, although in the last few years several small patrols under Department of Native Affairs officials have penetrated some regions, and the Administration patrol boat has made a number of trips along the whole Arnhem Land coast. For a long time there was no full-time medical officer concentrating on Aboriginal welfare,[18a] while the majority of police are still "Protectors of Aborigines". Even today there is no co-ordinated Aboriginal policy for the whole of Australia, although several abortive moves have been made in this direction. Each State still controls its own Aboriginal population, with its own local regulations. But the Northern Territory is under Commonwealth jurisdiction. Here a Native Affairs Branch was established in 1939, and some of its patrol officers have received training in anthropology and allied subjects.

Even if Dr Thomson's recommendations were not all put into effect, and even if some are not accorded full approval today by anthropologists and administrators, they were nevertheless significant as far as Arnhem Land was concerned. This was the first time in the history of Arnhem Land, apart from Missionary

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enterprise, that an attempt was made by officialdom to understand the problems of the natives themselves, and the first constructive step in a situation that desperately needed an unbiassed and sympathetic approach. 175 648

Other forces too had been at work behind the scenes, and indeed succeeded in influencing official opinion to a greater extent than did the work of Dr Thomson. To describe this fully would require access to private and confidential papers and so on which are at present unavailable. Unfortunately, from the historian's point of view, these have not been published, and he is forced to rely on the *Reports* of Dr Thomson and of contemporary committees and enquiries. Thomson's *Reports* and recommendations were preceded by much official activity and pressure from scientists (such as Professor A. P. Elkin), Mission bodies and other agencies. Thomson's *Reports* were in harmony with a growing section of public opinion which had for several years been bringing pressure to bear on the Commonwealth Government.

This led eventually to the formulation of what was regarded as a new and positive policy for the Aborigines in the Northern Territory. It was drawn up by the Minister of the Interior (Hon. J. McEwen) and the Secretary of the Department (Mr J. Carrodus), with the help of Professor Elkin. Thus Thomson's recommendations were only one factor in the official and unofficial combination which was serving to introduce a new epoch into Arnhem Land.

Dr Thomson's second trip to Arnhem Land extended from June 1936 to October 1937.[14] During this trip he took back to their home territory the three natives, Neidjalma, Mau and Nagaia, who had been serving sentences for their part in the Caledon Bay massacre.

Dr Thomson's most valuable contribution, in this case, was his report on European and Japanese activities in Arnhem Land. Since this has a direct bearing on the subject we may quote some of his comments.[15] During 1936-37, he said, the invasion of the Reserve by Japanese, and by Europeans (chiefly from Darwin), reached such proportions that conditions he had previously reported were intensified. The Reserve was being violated to such

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an extent that it was a Reserve only in name. Not only were the natives widely exploited by white men and Japanese, but they were often taken to Darwin and other places by boat, either as passengers, or on vessels with Japanese crews in return for the prostitution of their women. During 1936, in spite of the lessons of 1933, white men were engaged in trepang fishing and other activities, with depôts on the Reserve along the eastern and western coast of Arnhem Land.

Throughout 1937 the growing number of Japanese-manned pearling vessels in the waters of the Reserve was a potent factor in the local unrest that was becoming steadily more serious each month. In May 1936-37, states Dr Thomson, there were upwards of seventy vessels within sight at one time from the beach at Mooroonga Island in the Crocodile Group.[16] One of these vessels, the *Tenjin Maru*, had a crew of fifteen men, so that at a conservative estimate there were perhaps seven hundred Japanese on the Arnhem Land coast at this time. The pearling fleets included boats from Darwin as well as from Thursday Island, in addition to the Japanese vessels. It became their practice to resort to certain anchorages, especially at the King and Liverpool Rivers, at Cape Stewart, Mooroonga Island, and Elcho Island; and here large congregations of Aborigines met the boats. Unrest, instability and lawlessness increased among them, and a state very near chaos resulted.

Dr Thomson, at this time, urged that attention should be paid to his recommendations regarding complete segregation, and the inviolability of the Reserve. He did not stipulate permanent segregation, for all time, but declared: "It should be the policy to maintain these inviolable reserves for the natives who are still in possession of their culture, until and unless a sound working policy and one in the best interests of the Aboriginals is established, tested, and proved by experience over a long period, among the natives who are already detribalised".[17] In another Report he made recommendations similar to those already cited, elaborating on some points but in no way modifying his previous views.[18] These serve as a valuable basis for future discussion and formulation of native policy.

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But although Dr Thomson's reports showed the disastrous results of Japanese infiltration, nothing really effective was done in respect of this until the end of 1941 brought war with Japan. Then, at last, intercourse of these people with the Aborigines was brought to a close.

Little has been said here concerning missionary enterprise in Arnhem Land, a form of contact which has profoundly influenced certain aspects of native life, even though it has only a partial bearing on the main theme of this book. We shall refer to this again in the following chapter. Another factor with which we have not dealt concerns Prof. Lloyd Warner,[19] already mentioned, who carried out anthropological work, principally in the Milingimbi area, between 1926 and 1929—that is, before the epoch we have been considering in this chapter. This was the first detailed anthropological work undertaken in the Arnhem Land region;[20] and it is reasonable to suppose that his studies did, to some extent at least, influence native thought. He and his work were still remembered in 1946-47, more or less clearly, by natives along the coast from Milingimbi to Yirrkalla.

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175 undesirable elements. Dr Thomson, for example, has commented
648 on the demoralising effects of Japanese association with the Aborigines.

Summarising, then, we can observe that the long period of Baijini-Macassan contact resulted in some measure of adjustment between alien and Aboriginal; and while no other elements were present, the *status quo* was maintained. With the advent of another cultural group conditions were altered, and the period of unsettlement commenced. As still other elements made their appearance on the north coast, this unrest among the Aborigines was accentuated, and lasted more or less continuously until 1942, when they began to experience repercussions from the second World War.

However, the establishment of the Arnhem Land Reserve, the murders of the 1930's, and the pacification expeditions which followed, did herald a new epoch. And although this period of unsettlement continued, mainly owing to the presence of large numbers of Japanese, it was actually drawing to a close. The administration was becoming more directly interested in the welfare of the Arnhem Landers. Recommendations relating to Aboriginal policy were being drafted, missionary enterprise was being extended, with more apparent official backing, and a Native Affairs Branch was gradually being formed. These were the principal indications that the old period was coming to an end, even if the new ideas could not yet be put into practice. Indeed, their execution was postponed for some years by the entry of the Japanese into the second World War, and the placing of the Territory under complete military control.

175 Let us pause to consider the position of the Missions in Arnhem
797 Land, and their part in the general overall picture of culture contact.

Between 1846 and 1848, a Roman Catholic missionary priest named Rev. D. Angelo Confalonière was stationed at Port Essington.[1] In 1900, also in western Arnhem Land, a small Mission station was started under the control of a Mr Lennox, but its stay was brief and unsuccessful.[2] The Roper River Mission began operations in the first years of this century (1908) and extended its activities to Groote Eylandt in 1921, concentrating there at

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But it was not possible for any group, under the circumstances in which the Arnhem Landers found themselves, to have their cake and also to eat it.

The Missions were interested in gathering together groups of natives around the stations. Only in this way could settlements be built up, and the new ways firmly entrenched in the minds of the natives. They built houses in which to live, and churches in which to propagate their religion – for this was, after all, the main reason for their presence. Gardens were cultivated; and some of them engaged in trading; for missions had to be economically "safe", just like other forms of business. Schools at this period functioned very intermittently. Their range of subjects was limited and related primarily to religious training. Aboriginal children were not given a clear picture of European culture and its relation to the rest of the world, nor taught how to adjust themselves to these new conditions. Food was distributed either for work accomplished, or virtually as "bait" to attract natives to visit the stations, or to attend church or school. But on the whole the work of missionaries seems to have been dictated by purely humanitarian ideals.

The functioning of their stations depended greatly on the personality of the superintendents, and on their tolerant and sympathetic understanding of Aboriginal custom and belief. The Missions were acting as bulwarks against more unpleasant aspects of European and alien contact. They did demonstrate to the natives that all Europeans were not the same, and that some had more kindly intentions than others. Missionaries attended to the sick, the aged and the young. But these early years of Mission contact were mainly occupied with "digging in", with establishing their position and developing a formula by which to approach their problems. The natives had now a refuge to which they could retreat. In spite of all this, the presence of Missions did not prevent their contact with the Japanese and the European traders.

With the first raid on Darwin on 19 February 1942, when the North was thrown into confusion, Japanese trading activities ceased. Plans were made to evacuate female missionaries (as well as civilian women and children), and many of the mixed-bloods from Croker Island and Groote Eylandt; and the whole northern

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part of the Territory was placed under complete military control as from 21 February of that year.[6]

The Aborigines of Arnhem Land soon realised this position. Some drifted back to the bush, while others stayed around the Missions, with their skeleton male staffs. Others again, particularly from the Roper River, from western and south-western Arnhem Land, and from Milingimbi, went overland to seek employment with the Army, and later on special Army native settlements were set up along the main North-South road.[7] The Missions tried to keep going, but owing to staff shortages their work was virtually at a standstill. Everything was subordinated to military control and activity. The Army made patrols out to Oenpelli, and to other places on the fringe of Arnhem Land. The Air Force set up bases at north Goulburn Island, near Oenpelli, at Gove (near Yirrkalla), in the Wessels, and on Groote Eylandt. At Gove, the largest of these, hundreds of Army, Naval and Air Force personnel were stationed or passed through, and came into direct contact with local Aborigines. Many of the natives themselves experienced something of the more unpleasant aspects of warfare. Milingimbi station was bombed, and in the Wessels three natives lost their lives when a missionary was taken prisoner on a Japanese seaplane. Naval boats patrolled the coast fairly regularly, and aeroplanes were a common sight to the natives.

Without dwelling at any length on this period, we may say briefly that it brought with it further unsettlement. The Aborigines were thrown into intensive contact with a great many people belonging to a very different culture, and representing various shades of opinion and behaviour within that culture. Apart from physical appearances, they were in the natives' eyes quite unlike previous visitors. They were neither traders nor officials, police nor missionaries, but a group which, as far as the natives were concerned, was more or less disinterested. Some treated the local people in the way that Europeans usually did, and others looked on them rather as fellow human beings. Their services were required from time to time; they were employed in various ways, receiving payment in money or goods, and many of them also were given presents of various kinds.

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POSTSCRIPT

Since the writing of this volume some changes have taken place in the administration of the Arnhem Land Reserve, while several scientific surveys have been made to various parts of it. Certain areas have been opened to European infiltration. The Australian Aluminium Commission has been permitted to prospect for bauxite in the vicinity of Melville Bay and Castlereagh Bay, as well as on Marchinbar Island in the Wessels. Mineral workings have begun near the Bulman, north-east of Mainoru, in southern Arnhem Land. Pearling rights have been granted in the vicinity of Truant Island not far from Cape Arnhem, and Japanese pearling fleets are returning to work the rich Arafura Sea.

The Commonwealth Government has now decided to vary the provisions relating to the control of mineral resources on Aboriginal reserves. "If any part of a native reserve has ceased to be necessary for the use and benefit of the natives it may be severed from the reserve and, if mining takes place on the severed portion, royalties will be paid into a special fund to be applied to the welfare of the natives. The method of revocation has been made subject to strict safeguards involving successively a report by the Director of Native Welfare, a recommendation by the Administrator, approved by the Minister and notification to the Commonwealth Parliament."[a]

All this means that another Chapter in the history of the remaining 4000 odd Aborigines of Arnhem Land has begun.

For these Arnhem Landers the effects of the past cannot be completely eradicated. Such effects have indeed moulded current

[a] Second Native Welfare Conference in Canberra on 29 September 1952; *Native Welfare in Australia*, by Paul Hasluck, Minister for Territories, Perth 1953.

orders (mother-in-law and husband of mother-in-law[35]) to build up goodwill, *märaŋguma*, lit. "to build up *marr*" (see page 37) and deliberately intended to leave a feeling of obligation (*vide supra* page 43).

(5) *buku djauyun*, straight-out exchange or barter, in which one article is balanced against another. In Arnhem Land, where the ceremonial aspect even of transactions in which commodities change hands, is stressed, it is the "giving" that is the important matter, the rite, the gift and counter gift, rather than the assessment of its value or equivalent (see below no. 6).

(6) *mälli*, buy or purchase. The idea of direct purchase is foreign to the Arnhem Land socio-economic pattern and probably owes its origin to the influence of Indonesian culture. In former times the Macassar voyagers arrived on the coast of Arnhem Land with the north-west monsoon and dispersed along the coast to their regular fishing stations, vessels returning again and again to the same areas which they had visited in previous years and where they set up depots on shore for the boiling and smoking of *bêche-de-mer* or trepang.

The Macassar voyagers recognised the native ownership of land, and the people say that they paid tribute each season to the owners of the territories for the right to fish for trepang and pearls. In referring to this *payment* by the Macassar visitors it is significant that the natives used the word *mälli*. My informants stated that the natives themselves did not actually work for the Macassar trepangers but occa-

[35] The special status of this man as the recipient, depends chiefly upon the fact, not that he is *kauwäl* (mother's brother), but that he is the husband of *mukul rumaro*, wife's mother, actual or potential.

sionally, when men were short, they helped to make up the crews of canoes which operated as tenders from the praus in diving for trepang.

Today the word *mälli*, with this idea of "payment", is used principally in connection with the manufacture of wooden dugout canoes, and these form part of the culture complex that was left as a legacy by the Indonesian visitors, a fact which is stressed in mythology.[26]

A glance at the various types of transactions listed above, in which property, or *gerri*, changes hands, and in which the natives' own terms and classification have been used, brings out the fact that in all but one the social or ceremonial aspect rather than the hard material or "commercial", the strictly economic, is stressed, and that in only one is the idea of direct *payment* or recompense, paramount. This is in the manufacture of the wooden dugout canoe, *lippa lippa*, which, as will be seen in section 4, is the work of special craftsmen. Apart from receiving it as a gift, there are two principal ways of obtaining a canoe. The first is by employing a craftsman to cut it, the second, called "*täkkul koŋ gurrupän*", lit. "axe hand give", is to pay the craftsman by presenting him with a steel axe, which, after he has used it to cut the canoe, becomes his own property.

[26] There is some tendency to assume that these wooden canoes were once manufactured with stone axes. Actually proof is not lacking of the fact that the *lippa lippa* (wooden dugout canoe) was part of the culture complex introduced by the visitors from Indonesia and that these canoes were never made in Australia until after the introduction of the iron axe. (This, however, does not apply to the seagoing dugout outrigger canoes of Eastern Cape York Peninsula, North Queensland, which were made with native shell adzes, but which had a separate origin.)

[396] voyages in the open sea, the matter is different. These craft
501 are hollowed out of a single tree. They have no keels, but are quite smooth underneath, and today are built without outriggers (although these are said to have been used by the Macassars), and depend for their safety and stability as much on the skill employed in their manufacture as in
[435] the seamanship of their crews. These *lippa lippa* are unlike any other element of material culture and are valued greatly.
173 The natives say that in former times the Macassar voyagers
439 brought these craft to Arnhem Land each season in their
● 648 praus and that a prau carried as many as eight or ten *lippa*
501 *lippa*. When the time came for their departure, the Macassar men presented the canoes to the natives as part of their farewell payment, and this became a ceremonial occasion.

177 Before the coming of the Indonesian voyagers the natives
501 used only bark canoes,[20] called *bärwän*, and swimming logs,
[396] and it was only after the introduction by the Macassars of the *lippa lippa*, together with iron tools for cutting it, that the Arnhem Land people began making wooden canoes for themselves. Much labour is involved in the cutting of a big canoe, and none of the tools formerly used by the natives of Arnhem Land would have been fitted for
[412] this work. Although they possessed stone axes and shell scrapers, they lacked such tools as the fine, strong, relatively efficient adzes made from shell such as were used by the sea-faring peoples of Cape York Peninsula. This fact, and the way in which the wooden canoe was introduced, as well as its association with the Macassar voyagers, has given the *lippa lippa* a special place in Arnhem Land culture. But

[314] [20] The bark used is that of *Eucalyptus tetrodonta*, one of the "stringybarks", which is much used in technology. In addition to the manufacture of canoes, it serves for the roofing of houses and for the manufacture of certain vessels used for carrying water, as well as in the preparation of food.

9: Thomson E-5 (1935-1943)1949
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by repeated intervention of the Australian Customs Authorities after Federation. The Indonesian influence in Arnhem Land, therefore, probably extended over a period of nearly two hundred years, perhaps much longer. Although there is no conclusive evidence as to the time when these visits commenced, there is reason for the belief that they occurred over a relatively long period, and a study of the culture shows that the visitors from Indonesia exercised a strong influence on the people. This is apparent in their material culture, and to an even greater extent in their social and ceremonial life and mythology. I have mentioned (page 71, footnote) my surprise at finding in settled country on the Roper River, even before I entered the then isolated country of Arnhem Land, fine iron spear heads from Blue Mud Bay, an area where iron was still difficult to obtain and much coveted. The natives of this region have been suspected of attacking *bêche-de-mer* and other craft merely for the iron in the water tanks and trepang boilers, from which, by a laborious process of hammering and grinding, they manufacture fine spear heads. This was in 1935, when I had been sent by the Commonwealth Government to investigate unrest and tribal fighting in Arnhem Land. The people of Caledon and Blue Mud Bays were regarded as warlike and aggressive and were still greatly feared by the natives to the south, with whom they had little contact and who would not have entered their territory.

Subsequent work in Arnhem Land revealed the existence of the great ceremonial exchange cycle which has been described in detail on page 67 above. But while the *kumur märnda* relationship exists throughout the whole of Arnhem Land, and while the ceremonial exchange cycle draws *gerri* from far beyond this region, there is evidence for the belief that it was the visits of Macassar voyagers, who

10: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1958
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sitting around singing. I was afraid again because I did not know what they were going to do. I did not cry. I just looked down and said nothing. They told me to stand up on the logs and squat down over the hot stones. An old man stood by. He had some lily leaves that had been soaked in water. He threw the lily leaves on the hot stones. Steam came up all around me. This went inside my anus and into my body and all through it and came out my mouth. That is what those old men told me. 159 783 852

They told me it would make me very strong and clean me all out and make me all the same as the power song. I know now they did this for this reason and so that I wouldn't be greedy and could go a long time without food and without drink.

Two or three old men warmed their hands over the fire and put them to my mouth and talked to me. They said, "You are no longer a baby. You are growing up and going to be a big man. You must not swear at anybody. You must not lie. You must not chase after other men's wives." 159 852 [867]

Another old man rubbed my navel. He said, "This will make you very strong and you won't get hungry quickly and you won't try to eat too much food." One old man sat beside me. He picked up a piece of kangaroo. He said, "This one is not kangaroo. What do you call this one?" Another old man sat on the other side of me and whispered the power name of kangaroo in my ear. I called out the secret name of this food when I swallowed it. When I said this, all the old men who were sitting around in the men's chorus sang out, "Yai! Yai!"

That first old man then named all the kinds of foods that grow in the bush and that are game and that are fish, and he said this same thing to me and that other old man told me their power names. All the time the leader beat his singing sticks and sang the sacred names of these foods. This was the first time I had ever heard the secret language which only we men understand. No women hear these things. Women are profane and they would spoil them. These are things only for men to know. Children and women are not strong enough (pages 288-290). [198] [562]

He Grows Up—A Foreign Woman Seduces Him

My father and I went to visit my nati's people at Elcho Island (map, page 40). I was larger then, and my circumcision had been a few dry seasons in the past. Some Macassar men were there, and they said that the white men were getting very mean and cheeky and that they were going to stop the Macassar men from coming. They said that this was their last voyage and they would never come again. They said that white men were all the same as animals and that they were big men and had hair on them and were very fierce and they just killed people because they liked to kill. 159 648

10: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1958
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159 They said that white men always stole all the women of a people they
648 visited, and when the people complained they killed them. Our old men believed them. We were all very afraid. We were sorry that the Macassar men were not coming again, for they brought us tomahawks and calico and other things we liked (pages 451-470).

One day after they had gone we saw out in the middle ocean the sail of a big boat. My older brother said he would go out and look. He was always very curious and wanted to see things for himself. He was sent out by the old men, who stayed back, for old men are like that. The old men thought he would be killed, but all the time I thought, "No, white men have fathers and mothers and wives just the same as black men." I thought a minute. I got in the canoe with my brother. We rode out to the lugger. A man threw down a rope for us to come up on. Everybody in our canoe jumped, for we thought something was going to kill us. When we saw it was a rope we were a little bit ashamed and we laughed. We crawled up the rope and went on deck.

There was a black man on board. He belonged to the tribe of Cape Don. He was called Cape Don Tommy by the white men on board. We did not know him then, but because he was a black man and he looked happy we felt better. He talked Macassar. We could talk Macassar, too. We did not
[198] talk his language, and he could not talk ours. Macassar was always the language black men talked when they could not understand each other's language. There were a white man and some Malays on board. This white man wanted some tortoise shell and pearls. We all talked in our own language and they could not understand us. My brother said that when it came night we would all sneak on board and steal all the things that this white man had. The white man, when he saw me, liked me. The Malays also liked me. They told Cape Don Tommy to ask me if I would come with them and be their cabin boy. I was a little bit afraid, but always when I was a little boy I wanted to go places and see other people. I said I would go. My brother was very afraid and wanted me to come with them, but I stayed on the ship and they went away. My brothers came after me and tried to catch me. They thought that white man was going to shoot me.

159 Our sailboat went on as far as the Crocodile Islands. When we got there I was very sorry I had gone with them, for I did not know what they were going to do with me. We put down our anchor. We got in the dinghy and were going ashore. I cried and cried. There was a Chinaman on board who was their cook. He liked me and he gave me food. We left the islands and went out to Junction Bay. I found some pelican and sea gull eggs and ate a lot of them. I asked if black fellows lived there. I did not know then that black men lived all around this seacoast. I looked around and tried to find

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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Introduction

BY PROFESSOR A. P. ELKIN

FEW people had any interest in north-eastern Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, until 1933. The Aborigines killed five Japanese towards the end of the preceding year, and in 1933, two white prospectors, two beachcombers, and also a member of the police party which had been sent out to arrest the murderers of the Japanese. It seems that in the first place the natives had received some provocation, which justified their subsequent actions, at least in their sight, if not in ours. In addition, they resented the intrusion of yellow and white strangers into their country, who came to satisfy their own interests, not to help the natives.

In some similar situations in other parts of Australia, punitive expeditions have been sent out, resulting in dire consequences for many innocent Aborigines, and the creation of antagonistic attitudes between white and black. Fortunately, wiser plans prevailed; indeed, public opinion, enlightened by the determined views of Missionary and Aborigines' Protection Societies, demanded that they should prevail. It was obvious that some type of buffer should be established in the eastern part of this corner of Arnhem Land, to stand between the native on the one hand, and the occasional intruder on the other hand. The area was an Aboriginal Reserve, but it could not be patrolled in such a way as to preserve its inviolability; it is difficult, out-of-the-way country. Moreover, the best buffer would be one of a permanent nature which would reveal the white man as one desirous of serving the native, not just making use of him or his country.

The Methodist Missionary Society provided this buffer

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15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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by sending a missionary and his wife, who in 1934 selected Yirrkala, near Cape Arnhem, as a suitable centre from which understanding and friendship could radiate out into those parts of the region not influenced by Milingimbi, 150 miles to the west, and the Groote Eylandt Mission, 140 miles to the south.

This missionary was Wilbur Chaseling, the author of this book, readers of which will realize that an excellent choice was made. Mr and Mrs Chaseling did not have time to take the course in Anthropology in the University of Sydney, for the need to go north was urgent; they could only attend a few times and discuss their work with myself. This book, however, and later talks which I have had with Mr Chaseling show two things: first, that he had the facility to get to know and understand his native people, their culture and manner of life, and second, that he used and applied this knowledge in working out his missionary objectives and methods. Thus, one objective which he set himself was 'to preserve native culture, to encourage the revival of old ceremonies and to preserve in the natives an appreciation of their own social organization'. At the same time, he realized that some customs (such as infanticide and 'warfare') had to be discouraged, while, along with agriculture and medicine, the Christian faith had to be presented in a way that could be understood, and understood, not as a contradiction of, and judgement on, the past, but as its fulfilment.

Mr Chaseling's book is a readable and simple introduction to the life and faith of a primitive food-gathering people. It provides a real insight into their minds and everyday happenings. An anthropologist might examine and discuss more theoretically (and boringly) various aspects of the social organization or ritual life, but limited as he is to a couple of visits totalling about twenty-one months, he could not provide that wealth of illustrations and incidents which the observant missionary who spends several years in the

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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CHAPTER ONE

The Romance of Arnhem Land

WILD and remote Arnhem Land, in the far north of Australia, has long been the subject of popular rumour. Its notorious nomads met seventeenth-century European navigators at the spear-point, and stray adventurers have been clashing with them ever since. They developed a notoriety in raiding Macassar trading-proas and later Japanese fishing-luggers (though not without provocation) for the loot that was in them. Occasional prospectors, geologists, botanists, and adventurers kept to their luggers or, when venturing ashore, went fully armed.

I first heard of Arnhem Land in 1923 when the *Douglas Mawson* disappeared off the coastline. Fantastic rumours grew out of the disappearance of the ship, and it was alleged that survivors had landed in Arnhem Land, where the men had been killed and the women appropriated by Stone Age warriors. The tale was accepted and world-wide indignation was aroused.

But living with nomads soon dispels any suggestion that they have the ability to conceal news, particularly scandal. Here there are no secrets, for scheming old women persistently mutter the thoughts that are in their minds, setting the camp agog and breeding the prolific squabbles of bush life.

In 1933, clashes with Yulengor, the extermination of Japanese fishing-crews, the mysterious disappearance of beachcombers, and the spearing of an investigating trooper made Australia aware of the thousands of square miles of uncontrolled continent which was peopled only by Stone

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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648 Age men. Very little was known of Arnhem Land and there was a great deal of guessing. Charts were coastline sketches plotted by Matthew Flinders in the stormy season in 1803, when to overcome the tossing of his small boat, he ordered his sailors to lash him high on the mast with his box of instruments by his side. In the medley of suggestions made for the subjugation of east Arnhem Land the Commonwealth Government accepted the offer of the Methodist [197] Missionary Society to establish a mission station in the area, and it was my good fortune to be accepted to commence the new work.

121 I had a personal interest in these people, for nomads and their ways had teased my fancy from infancy. Both my mother's and father's families were among the pioneers in the Hawkesbury Valley in New South Wales, where they erected their slab huts and grew their maize. Life was hard for the pioneer, but it was also interesting, with its floods, fires, isolation, and Stone Age men. One died from spear wounds, several had hairbreadth escapes, and stories of their adventures retold among the scenes of the events made a happy background for a growing boy. In one region, a crumbling stone fire-place was all that remained of a stone-and-slab homestead where a fatal attack had been made: on another hillside a partly buried hearthstone showed where a settler's wife had defended herself from an enraged warrior with boiling water from her cooking-pots. As a child, my happiest adventures were in caves blackened by ancient camp-fires and bearing the imprint of aboriginal hands, or amongst rounded sandstone pillars in a totem-centre, or beside flat rocks and caves scored by Stone Age artists.

122 In May 1934 my wife and I landed in Darwin. Five
114 hundred miles of trackless bush and the Arafura Sea lay between us and the Gulf of Carpentaria, and the only means of transport was a lugger. A lugger sounded very glamorous;

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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177 262 appreciate it, particularly during their New Year festivals, but nomads will not eat the product, and their half-starved dingoes turn from it.

648 At Caledon Bay we walked over the scene of the then recent Japanese massacre. In 1933 the Asiatics came to fish for bêche-de-mer, and nomads told me that they landed near the aboriginal camp and went from one family to another offering handfuls of tobacco in return for women. Tobacco makes an almost irresistible appeal to nomads, but they surlily refused to trade, though the tobacco so tantalizingly near made them moody and irritable. Trouble was still brewing some days later, when the Japanese established their camp and employed nomads to collect firewood for the trepang fires. It is said that an Asiatic threw a piece of damper at a Yulengor for refusing to work, and thereby brought the trouble to a head; for even if they are desperately poor, nomads are extremely sensitive to a slight. Their spears were hidden in the sand, and they speared the Japanese so that only one escaped by diving into the sea and swimming to a nearby headland. Spears punctured the surface as he swam underwater, but he out-witted his pursuers by ingeniously breaking the head off a spear and clasping it under his arm as he fled into the bush. His ruse worked, and pursuing Yulengor said: 'Leave him, he has the spear through him and will soon be dead.' Days later, he arrived at Milingimbi, two hundred miles away, lacerated, exhausted and naked, and missionaries later took him to Darwin. He took the first boat to Japan.

797 [133] No suitable site for a station could be found in Caledon Bay, so we returned to Yirrkala near Cape Arnhem. It had an exposed anchorage and poor soil, but it also had fresh water, an elevated building-site and clean beaches. We decided to establish the station there.

By the middle of November, timber had been cut and

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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trepanger, trader, scientist, and missionary with peculiar and unheard of ideas, and with theories of personal possessions, which they decline to share, although living in an aboriginal community based on reciprocal sharing and exchanging, in which all are relations.

These two systems have been clashing for one hundred and seventy years, and while some pioneers and traders have resorted to force and compulsion, others have reasoned and explained their attitude to property and the necessity for respecting personal possessions. But whatever methods have been adopted to instil in the aboriginal a new regard for private property, he retains his ancient, instinctive, and characteristic attitude of innocently using whatever takes his fancy. A missionary once told me he had shut a youth in a tool shed for continued pilfering, but that each night he climbed out through the gable, spent the night in camp with his friends, and was back in detention next morning, ready for breakfast and official release. On another station the missionary pointed to a roomy wooden hut under a shady tamarind tree, and said that it had been put there as a warning to deter pilfering from the gardens. Eventually, with due ceremony, a Yulengor was locked up, but he burrowed his way out through the sandy floor and made nocturnal visits to his friends. By morning he was back in place with the hole filled in, and ready for food, tobacco, and a sleep during the day. In the following wet season he claimed the building for himself and family and proceeded to camp in it.

Trepangers made seasonal visits to Arnhem Land, and property rights were argued with spears and rifles. At the first hint of trouble these fishermen sailed away, and their obvious precautions were not lost on nomads, who realized that they were feared and developed lugger-raiding propensities.

Apart from the desirability of exercising some control over warlike hordes, a simple code of law and order was necessary

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YULENGOR

211 [242] Nomads have not acquired the art of recording their thoughts, but they make use of the well-known 'letter-stick', and those I have received have been handed over with a certain breathlessness, as if they were charmed missives. Their use is intended to lend an importance to a message, which however cannot be deciphered by the recipient. All he sees on the flat oblong chip of wood is a series of carved lines, circles, and crosses, probably partly covered by a coat of red ochre. After an appropriate examination of the stick the bearer is invariably called on to decode the message. He obligingly takes it, and pointing to one mark says that it represents the writer, that another is for his brother, that several strokes refer to a number of days or lunar months, and that a wide cut is a request for a canoe or an indication of the strength of a raiding party. Marks on letter-sticks merely remind the bearer of points in the message he is conveying. The last line on all letter-sticks sent to me invariably ended with the request: 'Please send me some tobacco.'

Before leaving Darwin on the first trip to east Arnhem [648] Land, I visited three brothers who were serving sentences for having murdered Japanese fishermen in Caledon Bay. They were glum and disinterested till I told them where I was going, and they then asked me to take a letter-stick to their father. Weeks later I delivered this message on an isolated beach near Caledon Bay, and that night the camp sang and wailed over memories revived by the letter-stick.

207 372 Probably the most popular of all delusions concerning the nomad is that he sends messages by means of smoke. I am not aware that any aboriginal has ever sent any coded signal by smoke; yet, on the other hand, they will interpret smoke-fire as indicating the presence of visitors and will light fires for an easily understood purpose, or in accordance with a pre-arranged plan. Fires that break out unex- [775] pectedly and perhaps are due to smouldering logs bursting

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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CHAPTER TWELVE

Aboriginal Temperament

Aborigines are light-hearted and enjoy fun and laugther. 152
Youths are for ever sky-larking and playing practical jokes, [522]
and in ceremonial pantomimes the men spend a lot of time
singing, dancing, and mimicking birds and animals. Intense 152
joy is also expressed through prolonged wailing, when women 201
rhythmically pound their heads with sharp stones and spear-
heads till the blood flows freely.

Emotions lie close to the surface and without warning aborigines run through the gamut of them all. Some seem to be always weeping or wailing, but it would be wrong to imagine that they are a mournful or disconsolate race. To feel lonely for a son or daughter, temporarily in another part of the country, is enough to start a 'wail'. Others awake and join in for an hour or more before subsiding into sleep. When a family leaves camp the relatives will wail in loneliness for several nights, and so frequent are these wails that little attention is paid to them by the rest of the camp.

Twelve months after we landed at Yirrkala, the three boys who had been arrested and jailed in Darwin for their part [648] in the Japanese killings in Caledon Bay were repatriated to Yirrkala. Relatives surrounded them on the beach and took them to the camp, where they all sat in an uneasy silence till the women, overcome with joy, started to wail. Everyone joined in, and the deep passionate baritone cries of the old man and father of the horde throbbed through the wailing chorus of his sons' and sons' sons' families. Their welcome continued till dawn, with crying and blood-letting interspersed with camp-songs and dances.

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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the nomad's continuous thought and consideration in breaking branches, waiting at waterholes till the white man drinks first, breaking twigs for him to sleep on, and offering him the choicest parts of their scanty food. When the track has led through mangrove swamps they have paused on the edge of the mud and apologized for having led me into the mess; their solicitations have been embarrassing, and they have offered to carry me through the slime and tangled roots. 609

Early one morning two Yulengor left with me on a launch to take medical aid to a horde about thirty miles from Yirrkala. Shortly afterwards the engine gave trouble, and after I had set this right a spark escaped from the magneto cable and ignited petrol fumes in the cabin and exploded the fuel. In a few moments the boat was hopelessly ablaze from stem to stern and we had to dive overboard to extinguish the flames on our limbs and clothing. We were then about a mile from a small rocky island and started to swim toward it, but my knees were badly burnt and I was floundering badly. The boys then closed in and told me to put a hand on either of their shoulders, and in this way they helped me ashore. One boy was uninjured and swam the channel to the mainland for a canoe in which we hoped to make our way home. Whilst he was away the other lad regaled me with stories of several fatal shark attacks, and casually remarked that while I had been tinkering with the engine they had watched a twelve-foot shark cruising round the launch. Aboriginal courage is of the highest order, and their loyalty and devotion are above question. They make no parade of noble and unsuspected qualities, for they are among the natural attributes of the race and are accepted as a matter of course. 123 [577]

After a long patrol, Northern Territory troopers had captured two troublesome nomads and were taking them to jail, but when they were crossing a flooded creek the white men lost their horses and were carried downstream. The 648 577

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nomads themselves reached the bank of the creek, but seeing the plight of their captors they unhesitatingly dived in again and brought them to safety. The incident made a wide appeal and was hailed as something new in the make-up of the aboriginal. Soon afterwards a well-known Territorian, who had been born and reared among aboriginals, was taxed with being unappreciative of their high qualities, and he expressed the nomad's usual attitude to these things by saying: 'What is all the fuss about? They are like that.'

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YULENGOR

A goanna was among the many sacred totems in the canoe, and he fared better than the rest; he swam ashore and hid in a lagoon. His lagoon is now an important totem centre, and the lesser-spirit, or mali, of the goanna guards it. As in many underground springs, the water occasionally bubbles up in the lagoon, and this is a sign that the goanna is moving below. No women are allowed near the totem, and if yams in the vicinity are eaten the results are fatal. Old men who remember the Macassars told me that when they attempted to make their trepang camps on the beach by the lagoon the Yulengor got rid of them by refusing to allow them to use the water or to gather firewood.

Restrictions are enforced on firewood in the area, because the goanna sent his mali into one of the trees growing by the spring. When the Junkgowa followed the goanna ashore, they were attracted by the singular beauty of this tree, for as well as the goanna-mali they saw a small red parrot in the branches. They declared that thereafter the feathers of this parrot were to be used in decorating totems of the Dua moiety. The tree was pronounced sacred; there are now many of them near the lagoon, and the tabu has been extended to them all.

Totems, or 'rungga', floated ashore, and the Junkgowa hung them in the tree to dry. But when the pandanus palm armlets were washed up on the beach, they sprang to life and grew of their own accord, and the Junkgowa stripped them of their fronds and wove them into the first aboriginal armlets, dilly-bags, and nganmaras. These articles are in every-day use, but because the Junkgowa made them, they are also totems, and their story is preserved in the songs and ceremonies of the guardian horde.

Two other sacred centres were visited between Blue Mud Bay and Cape Arnhem, where the Junkgowa performed miracles and taught their children totemic secrets and dances. It is the record of these activities, some of them so trivial as